July 2023

Robert Land Academy
The Loyalist

Board announces LCol Smid's resignation

The Board of Governors of Robert Land Academy has reluctantly accepted the resignation of Headmaster Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Smid.

Board Chair Tim Hudak made the announcement to all Academy staff during their end of year meeting on June 27, recalling how LCol Smid's personality, strength of character and audacity were clearly evident during online interviews for the Headmaster position.

"To be a great leader you must be audacious," Hudak told the staff, noting how LCol Smid's audacity was evident in his reports to the Board and how he fought for changes he felt were needed at RLA, especially those that provided better wages and stability for staff, enriching the program for students, and re-investing in the Academy.

LCol Smid was appointed Headmaster in August of 2020 and immediately went to work, meeting with every single staff person within his first few weeks on the job. LCol Smid worked with the Board to complete the school's five-year strategic plan, created a strong parent committee as well as an alumni committee, and fostered stronger relationships with RLA friends and supporters.

"Ryan's leadership has been good for the Academy and for our students," said Hudak. "He has a vision for RLA that is evident in the strategic plan and he made necessary changes to move the Academy forward."
LCol Smid was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in October of 2022 and took a medical leave to focus on his health and his family. He tendered his resignation twice during that time, however the Board refused to accept it, confident he would return to good health and to the Headmaster position.

In June, LCol Smid tendered a third resignation so that he can spend more time with his wife Lisa and their two daughters as he continues his battle with cancer.

"It is with deep sadness and great reluctance, the Board of Governors has accepted the Headmaster's resignation," said Hudak.

Board Chair Tim Hudak

"Ryan's legacy will continue to benefit the students, parents and staff," he added, highlighting the new rappel tower, new science lab, enrichments to the academic and clubs programs, and reconnection to Canada's military as some of Smid's accomplishments at RLA.

Acting Headmaster Peter Stock will remain in that position as the board conducts a search for a new Headmaster.

A final word from the Headmaster

R.D. (Ryan) Smid, MMM, MB, CD
Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired)
Headmaster

Dear Members of the Robert Land Academy Family,

Prior to accepting the position of Headmaster in August 2020, I had served almost continuously with the Royal Canadian Artillery and its guns both large and small for nearly 28 years. After every successful mission, the transmission "End of Mission, Rest Easy" would be given to the Gunners so they could change around and prepare for whatever came next. Not every mission was successful. For the artillery to be effective, it was critically important that every member of the Team executed their specific role perfectly so that the rounds of artillery overlapped and covered the largest percentage of ground possible. In this way, you could maximize the effectiveness of whatever size organization it was, large or small.

As most of you are aware, I was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in October 2022. I had surgery in November and started chemo in January. That round of chemo ceased in April and I have recommenced with another round of chemo in June. My doctors and medical support staff have certainly been there for me when I have needed them most and I continue to work hard one day at a time to regain my health. It has been and remains a difficult journey. One I most certainly would not have been as successful with at this point if not for you. Yes, you.

I have been so blessed to have a wife and family who are beyond supportive. Lisa has been with me every step of the way. My family has readjusted so that we can succeed. My close friends turned out to indeed actually be my close friends! They know who they are, and for their support of me and my family I will always be grateful. My Army Regimental Family has provided a fire-team partner throughout and always made their massive presence felt. I had some expectation that this would be the case. What I could not know in advance was the absolute tremendous amount of support I would receive from the Robert Land Academy Family.

Once I had a diagnosis in October, I informed the Chair of the Board, at that time Bob Wright and offered my resignation. The operational capability of the Academy is the single most important thing to me and can't be negatively affected by any one individual, including me. Although he would not accept my resignation at that time, he did accept my advice that Major Peter Stock be appointed Acting Headmaster.

In January 2023, as it was becoming evident that I would not be able to recover to my full level of health, I once again offered my resignation to the Board. They would not accept it. At this point, Mr Tim Hudak had become the Chair. They signalled very strongly that their expectation was that I would beat this and they wanted me to return. Although I was a little bewildered at times, in my conversations with them I always felt their support and have known that the Board has been behind me throughout this entire ordeal. It is difficult to measure how incredibly helpful this has been to my mental wellness. With the latest news in April and May not being particularly positive, they have now agreed to accept my resignation effective 27 June 2023. The Board has been incredibly professional throughout this ordeal and I have always felt like a family member versus simply an employee of the Academy.

The staff of the Academy swung into action even sooner with personal notes of support, texts, calls, and gift baskets. I am so grateful for their efforts, I have always had the most respect for those who spent time and energy on my family, Lisa and the girls. That came through loud and clear on an almost daily basis.

But the gifts, cards, calls, etc didn't stop with staff, I can't tell you the number of alumni, friends of the Academy, former staff, members of 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, as well as parents and former parents I heard from. Just an unbelievable outpouring of support from such a disparate group.

Finally, to the boys serving at the Academy, you need to know that your individual prayers or positive thoughts for me did make a difference. It provided me with strength I didn't know I had and its result is measured in the increasing number of opportunities I have had with my family. I tried to thank you on Grad Parade for this but I'm not sure how effective I actually was that day. So let me try too be a little more succinct...thank you!

End of Mission, Rest Easy.